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Paul Joosten

Nuremberg, 15 July 1948

PAUL A. JOOSTEN
General Secretary
International Military
Tribunal

THE BRITISH WAR BLUE BOOK

Miscellaneous No. 9 (1939)

DOCUMENTS

CONCERNING

GERMAN-POLISH RELATIONS

AND THE

OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1939

Presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament by Command of His Majesty

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FARRAR & RINEHART

ON MURRAY HILL NEW YORK

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ment anxious to set up in Europe opposing blocks of countries with different ideas about the forms of their internal administration. We are solely concerned here with the proposition that we cannot submit to a procedure under which independent States are subjected to such pressure under threat of force as to be obliged to yield up their independence, and we are resolved by all means in our power to oppose attempts, if they should be made, to put such a procedure into operation.

No. 12.

Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax.

My Lord, *Berlin, May 28, 1939.*

I PAID a short visit to Field-Marshal Göring at Karinhall yesterday.

2. Field-Marshal Göring, who had obviously just been talking to someone else on the subject, began by inveighing against the attitude which was being adopted in England towards everything German and particularly in respect of the gold held there on behalf of the National Bank of Czecho-Slovakia. Before, however, I had had time to reply, he was called to the telephone and on his return did not revert to this specific question. He complained, instead, of British hostility in general, of our political and economic encirclement of Germany and the activities of what he described as the war party in England, &c.

3. I told the field-marshal that, before speaking of British hostility, he must understand why the undoubted change of feeling towards Germany in England had taken place. As he knew quite well the basis of all the discussions between Mr. Chamberlain and Herr Hitler last year had been to the effect that, once the Sudeten were allowed to enter the Reich, Germany would leave the Czechs alone and would do nothing to interfere with their independence. Herr Hitler had given a definite assurance to that effect in his letter to the Prime Minister of the 27th September. By yielding to the advice of his "wild men" and deliberately annexing Bohemia and Moravia, Herr Hitler had not only broken his word to Mr. Chamberlain but had infringed the whole principle of self-determination on which the Munich Agreement rested.

4. At this point the field-marshal interrupted me with a

description of President Hacha's visit to Berlin. I told Field-Marshall Göring that it was not possible to talk of free will when I understood that he himself had threatened to bombard Prague with his aeroplanes, if Dr. Hacha refused to sign. The field-marshal did not deny the fact but explained how the point had arisen. According to him Dr. Hacha had from the first been prepared to sign everything but had said that constitutionally he could not do so without reference first to Prague. After considerable difficulty telephonic communication with Prague was obtained and the Czech Government had agreed, while adding that they could not guarantee that one Czech battalion at least would not fire on the German troops. It was, he said, only at that stage that he had warned Dr. Hacha that, if German lives were lost, he would bombard Prague. The field-marshal also repeated, in reply to some comment of mine, the story that the advance occupation of Witkowitz had been effected solely in order to forestall the Poles who, he said, were known to have the intention of seizing this valuable area at the first opportunity.

5. I thereupon reminded Field-Marshal Göring that, while I had always appreciated the necessity for the Czechs, in view of their geographical position, to live in the friendliest political and economic relations with Great Germany, he had personally assured me last October that this was all that his Government desired. The precipitate action of Germany on the 15th March, which I again ascribed to the wild men of the party, had consequently, apart from everything and everybody else, been a great shock to me personally and had undone all that I had sought to achieve during my two years at Berlin. Moreover, however indifferent this might seem to him, I could not but regard the destruction of the independence of the Czechs as a major political error, even in Germany's own interests.

6. The field-marshal appeared a little confused at this personal attack on his own good faith, and assured me that he himself had known nothing of the decision before it had been taken. He would not, he said, have gone to San Remo if he had; nor had his stay there profited him, as he had hoped, owing to the unexpected amount of work which had in consequence been thrust upon him. He then proceeded to give a somewhat unconvincing explanation, though similar to that

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which Baron von Weizäcker had furnished me with last March, of the German attempt to come to a satisfactory arrangement with the Czechs and of its failure owing to Czech obstinacy and the revival of what he called the Benes spirit as the result of American encouragement.

7. As my time was limited, I told Field-Marshal Göring that I was well aware of the reasons adduced by his Government to justify its action, but I thought it more important that he himself should understand the British point of view in consequence of it. As the result of the Prague *coup* His Majesty's Government and the British people were determined to resist by force any new aggression. No one desired an amiable arrangement between Germany and Poland in respect of Danzig and the Corridor more than ourselves. But, if Germany endeavoured to settle these questions by unilateral action such as would compel the Poles to resort to arms to safeguard their independence, we and the French as well as other countries would be involved, with all the disastrous consequences which a prolonged world war would entail, especially for Germany, &c. Field-Marshal Göring did not appear to question our readiness to fight and restricted his reply to an attempt to prove that circumstances in 1939 were different to those in 1914, that no Power could overcome Germany in Europe, that a blockade this time would prove unavailing, that France would not stand a long war, that Germany could do more harm to Great Britain than the latter to her, that the history of Germany was one of ups and downs, and that this was one of the "up" periods, that the Poles had no military experience and that their only officers of any value were those who had acquired their training in the German army, that they were not and never had been a really united nation and that, since France and ourselves could not, and Russia out of self-interest would not, give them any effective military assistance, they would be taught a terrible lesson, &c. The field-marshal used, in fact, all the language which might be expected in reply to a statement that Germany was bound to be defeated. While I was perturbed at his reference to the unreality of Polish unity, which resembled the German arguments last year in regard to Czecho-Slovakia, he gave me the impression, by somewhat overstating his case, of considerably less confidence than he expressed.

8. At the end of this tirade, moreover, he asked me whether England, "out of envy of a strong Germany," was really bent on war with her and, if not, what was to be done to prevent it. I said that nobody in their senses could contemplate modern war without horror, but that we should not shrink from it if Germany resorted to another act of aggression. If, therefore, war was to be avoided, patience was necessary and the wild men in Germany must be restrained. Admittedly present-day Germany was in a dynamic condition, whereas England was by tradition the land of compromise. But compromise had its limits, and I did not see how the situation could be saved unless his Government were prepared to wait in order to allow excited spirits to calm down again and negotiations to be resumed in a better atmosphere.

9. At this point Field-Marshal Göring remarked that if the Poles tried to seize Danzig nothing would stop the Germans from acting at once. As my time was short, I made no comment on this but continued that neither the Prime Minister nor yourself had yet abandoned hope of a peaceful solution either as between Germany and Poland or between Germany and Great Britain, but that everything now entirely depended on Germany's behaviour and actions.

10. As I had already got up to go, the conversation then took a more amicable turn. Though I was in a hurry, he insisted on showing me with much pride the great structural alterations which he is making to the house at Karinhall and which include a new dining-room to hold an incredible number of guests and to be all of marble and hung with tapestries. He mentioned incidentally that the rebuilding would not be completed before November. He also produced with pride drawings of the tapestries, mostly representing naked ladies labelled with the names of various virtues, such as Goodness, Mercy, Purity, &c. I told him that they looked at least pacific, but that I failed to see Patience among them.

I have, &c.

NEVILE HENDERSON.

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No. 4.

Reichstag Speech, January 30, 1937.

(Translation.)

"By a series of agreements we have removed existing tensions and thereby contributed considerably to an improvement in the European atmosphere. I merely recall our agreement with Poland, which has worked out to the advantage of both sides . . . . And to my own fellow-citizens I would say that the Polish nation and the Polish State have also become a reality . . . . The peoples of these States (*i.e.*, Italy, Poland and the Balkan States) desire to live and they will live."

No. 5.

Reichstag Speech, February 20, 1938.

(Translation.)

"It fills us, in the fifth year following the first great foreign political agreement of the Reich, with sincere gratification to be able to establish that in our relationship to the State with which we had perhaps the greatest differences, not only has there been a *détente*, but that in the course of these years a constant improvement in relations has taken place. I know perfectly well that this was above all attributable to the circumstance that at the time there was no Western parliamentarism in Warsaw, but a Polish field-marshal, who as an eminent personality felt the significance, so important to Europe, of such a Germano-Polish *détente*. This good work, which had been doubted by so many at the time, has meanwhile stood the test, and I may say that, since the League of Nations finally gave up its perpetual attempts to unsettle Danzig and appointed in the new commissioner a man of great personal attainments, this most dangerous spot from the point of view of European peace has entirely lost its menacing character. The Polish State respects the national conditions in this State, and both the city of Danzig and Germany respect Polish rights. And so the way to a friendly understanding has been successfully paved, an understanding which, starting from Danzig, has to-day succeeded in spite of the attempts of certain mischief-makers in finally taking the poison out of the relations between Germany and Poland and transforming them into a sincere, friendly co-operation."

No. 6.

Speech at Nuremberg, September 14, 1938.

(Translation.)

"In Poland a great patriot and a great statesman was ready to make an accord with Germany; we immediately proceeded to action and completed an agreement which was of greater importance to the peace of Europe than all the chattering in the temple of the League of Nations at Geneva."

No. 7.

Speech in the Sportpalast, September 26, 1938.

(Translation.)

"The most difficult problem with which I was confronted was that of our relations with Poland. There was a danger that Poles and Germans would regard each other as hereditary enemies. I wanted to prevent this. I know well enough that I should not have been successful if Poland had had a democratic Constitution. For these democracies which indulge in phrases about peace are the most bloodthirsty war agitators. In Poland there ruled no democracy, but a man; and with him I succeeded, in precisely twelve months, in coming to an agreement which, for ten years in the first instance, entirely removed the danger of a conflict. We are all convinced that this agreement will bring lasting pacification. We realise that here are two peoples which must live together and neither of which can do away with the other. A people of 33 millions will always strive for an outlet to the sea. A way for understanding, then, had to be found; it has been found; and it will be ever further extended. Certainly things were hard in this area. The nationalities and small national groups frequently quarrelled among themselves.

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is the liberty that we have enjoyed for hundreds of years, and which we will never surrender. That I, of all men, should feel called upon to make such a declaration—that is the measure of the extent to which these events have shattered the confidence which was just beginning to show its head and which, if it had been allowed to grow, might have made this year memorable for the return of all Europe to sanity and stability.

It is only six weeks ago that I was speaking in this city, and that I alluded to rumours and suspicions which I said ought to be swept away. I pointed out that any demand to dominate the world by force was one which the democracies must resist, and I added that I could not believe that such a challenge was intended, because no Government with the interests of its own people at heart could expose them for such a claim to the horrors of world war.

And, indeed, with the lessons of history for all to read, it seems incredible that we should see such a challenge. I feel bound to repeat that, while I am not prepared to engage this country by new unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot now be foreseen, yet no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that, because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power in resisting such a challenge if it ever were made. For that declaration I am convinced that I have not merely the support, the sympathy, the confidence of my fellow-countrymen and countrywomen, but I shall have also the approval of the whole British Empire and of all other nations who value peace, indeed, but who value freedom even more.

No. 10.

Speech by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the House of Lords on March 20, 1939.

It is quite true, as both the noble Lord who spoke first and the noble Marquess have said, that recent events have been a profound shock to all thinking people in this country and very far outside it. It may perhaps be of use if with all brevity I

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give the House a short narrative in order to make sure we have the setting correct of what has actually passed during the last few days. The German military occupation of Bohemia and Moravia began on the morning of the 15th March, and was completed, as we know, without serious incident. It is to be observed—and the fact is surely not without significance—that the towns of Mährisch-Ostrau and Vitkovice were actually occupied by German S.S. detachments on the evening of the 14th March, while the President and the Foreign Minister of Czecho-Slovakia were still on their way to Berlin and before any discussion had taken place. On the 16th March Herr Hitler issued the decree, to which the noble Marquess has just referred, proclaiming that the former Czecho-Slovak territory occupied by German troops belonged henceforth to the German Reich and came under its protection under the title of "The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia."

It is not necessary to recapitulate the terms of that decree—it has been published—but it should be noted that, while the head of the Administration now to be set up is said to hold the rank of Head of State, and while the protectorate is said to be autonomous and self-administering, a Reich protector is resident in Prague with full powers of veto on legislation. Foreign affairs and the protection of nationals abroad devolve on the German Government, which will also maintain military garrisons and establishments in the protectorate. The protectorate is, further, in the German Customs Union, and, finally, the German Government can issue decrees valid in the protectorate and take any measures for the preservation of security and order. Perhaps I might quote one short article which seems to me to sum up the situation. It says:—

> "The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia shall exercise its sovereign rights in consonance with the political, military and economic importance of the Reich."

As to Slovakia, the independence of Slovakia was proclaimed on the 14th March, but at the request of Dr. Tiso, the head of the Slovak State, Herr Hitler has undertaken to place Slovakia under German protection and the military occupation of the territory by German troops is now proceeding. As regards

Ruthenia, the occupation of Ruthenia by Hungary, which began on the 14th March, has also proceeded. By the 16th March the Hungarian troops had reached the Polish frontier and had virtually completed the occupation of the province. Therefore, as a result of these several actions, the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia may be said now to be complete.

Before I come to some one or two of the things that fell from the noble Lord who moved, I would like to say something as to the grounds on which the German Government seek to justify the action that they have taken. The immediate cause of the present crisis in Central Europe originated in Slovakia, and it is claimed that the German Government was entitled to intervene on receiving the request for assistance from the dismissed Slovak Prime Minister. As your Lordships are well aware, there has always been a party in Slovakia which advocated autonomy. That autonomy was, in fact, achieved after Munich in agreement between the various Slovak parties and the Central Government in Prague. The extremist elements in Slovakia, however, were not satisfied with these arrangements, but on all the evidence that is available to me I find it impossible to believe that the sudden decision of certain Slovak leaders to break off from Prague, which was followed so closely by their appeal for protection to the German Reich, was reached independently of outside influence.

It is said that German intervention in Czecho-Slovakia was justified owing to the oppression of the German minority by the Czechs. But, as a matter of fact again it was only very shortly before Herr Hitler's ultimatum to the Czech President that the German press began to renew its campaign of last summer about the alleged Czech brutalities against German citizens. Actually the position of the German minority, which is about 250,000, would appear, since the Munich Agreement, to have been one of what might be termed exceptional privilege. Notwithstanding the right of option which had been accorded by article 7 of that agreement, the members of the German minority were encouraged to remain in Czecho-Slovakia in order that they might form useful centres of German activity and propaganda; and advice to that effect was given to the minority by its leader.

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It was as a result of the German-Czecho-Slovak Agreement for the mutual protection of minorities that the German Government obtained the legal right to take a direct interest in the treatment of their minority in Czecho-Slovakia. That minority at once obtained the right to set up separate organisations, and the Czecho-Slovak Government subsequently agreed that the German National Socialist Party in Czecho-Slovakia should be given full liberty to pursue its activities in Bohemia and Moravia. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the bulk of the incidents which occurred before the German invasion were deliberately provoked and that the effects were greatly magnified. It must be added in fairness that the Czecho-Slovak authorities received orders to act, and did act, with great restraint in the fact of that provocation. It is not necessary, I think, to say much upon the assertion that the Czecho-Slovak President really assented to the subjugation of his people. In view of the circumstances in which he came to Berlin, and of the occupation of Czech territory which had already taken place, I think most sensible people must conclude that there was little pretence of negotiation, and that it is more probable that the Czech representatives were presented with an ultimatum under the threat of violence, and that they capitulated in order to save their people from the horrors of a swift and destructive aerial bombardment.

Finally, it is said that Germany was in some danger from Czecho-Slovakia. But surely the German Government itself can hardly have expected that that contention could be seriously entertained in any quarter. Indeed, if I may sum up my own thought on these various explorations, I could wish that, instead of the communications and explanations which have been issued and which carry scant conviction, German superior force had been frankly acknowledged as the supreme arbiter that in fact it was.

In these circumstances, as you are aware, His Majesty's Government thought fit at once to take certain action. Here I touch a point which was touched both by the noble Lord who moved and by the noble Marquess who followed him. His Majesty's Government immediately suspended the visit of the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade to Berlin, by means of which it had been hoped that His Majesty's Government could directly intervene in those unofficial contacts of industrial representatives which were at that very moment taking place. We felt, and feel, as I think I said in my statement a few days ago, that in the circumstances which have arisen any development of our efforts in that direction was, as the noble Marquess said, frankly out of the question, and that that and many other things had to be and must remain indefinitely postponed. His Majesty's Government, as your Lordships also know, have recalled to report His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin, and he reached this country yesterday.

Further than those two practical steps, we have lodged a formal protest with the German Government in the sense of informing them that we cannot but regard the events of the last few days as a complete repudiation of the Munich Agreement and a denial of the spirit in which the negotiators of that agreement bound themselves to co-operate for a peaceful settlement. We have also taken occasion to protest against the changes effected in Czecho-Slovakia by German military action, and have said that, in our view, those changes are devoid of any basis of legality. I think, therefore, that we may claim to have left the German Government in no doubt of the attitude of His Majesty's Government, and although I do not cherish any exaggerated hopes of what may be the effect of protests, I think your Lordships will feel it abundantly right that such protests should be registered.

I have from time to time seen efforts made by German apologists to justify the action of their Government by some reference to the past history of the British Empire. It is not necessary to remind you that the principle on which the British Empire is conducted is education in self-government. Wherever we have been in the world, we have left a trail of freedom and of self-government, and our record has nothing in common with the suppression of liberty and independence of people whose political developments had already brought them to the point of enjoyment of those opportunities for self-expression. It has also been objected that what has happened in Czecho-Slovakia is of no interest or concern to this country. It is

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quite true that we have always recognised that, for reasons of geography, if for no other, Germany must from some points of view be more interested in Czecho-Slovakia or South-Eastern Europe than we are ourselves. It was the natural field for the expansion of German trade. But apart from the fact that changes in any part of Europe produce profound effects elsewhere, the position is entirely changed when we are confronted with the arbitrary suppression of an independent sovereign State by force, and by the violation of what I must regard as the elementary rules of international conduct.

It is natural enough that in the light of these events His Majesty's Government should be told, as the noble Lord told them this afternoon, that the policy of Munich was a tragic mistake. I cannot, of course, claim to correct the noble Lord upon an expression of opinion which he sincerely holds, but I can correct him, I think, on one limited observation that fell from him. He referred to the policy pursued by the Prime Minister as a personal policy. If by that he means that it was a policy to which the Prime Minister had given every ounce of energy, imagination and resolution that he possessed, I should not disagree with him, but if he suggests that it was a policy that was pursued without the fullest co-operation of myself as Foreign Secretary, and of every member of His Majesty's Government, then I must take leave to oppose to what he said the most emphatic contradiction.

My Lords, the Munich Settlement, which was approved by this House and in another place, was accepted by His Majesty's Government for two purposes, quite distinct. The first purpose was to effect a settlement, as fair as might be in all the extremely difficult circumstances of that time, of a problem which was a real one, and of which the treatment was an urgent necessity if the peace of Europe was to be preserved. As to that, I would say, as I have said before in this House, that I have no doubt whatever that His Majesty's Government were right, in the light of all the information available to them, to take the course they did. The second purpose of Munich was to build a Europe more secure, upon the basis of freely accepted consultation as the means by which all future differences might be adjusted; and that long-term purpose, my Lords, has been, as

we have come to observe, disastrously belied by events. We are charged with having too readily believed the assurances which were given by Herr Hitler—that after Munich he had no further territorial ambitions, and no desire to incorporate non-German elements in the Reich. The noble Lord referred to the Prime Minister as the "too-simple Prime Minister." I can assure your Lordships that neither the Prime Minister nor I, myself, nor any member of His Majesty's Government, has failed at any moment to be acutely conscious of the difference between beliefs and hope. It was surely legitimate and right to have hopes. But we have always acted—and I challenge any noble Lord to produce any evidence to the contrary—in the knowledge that only with time can hope be converted into sure beliefs.

It is no doubt the case that previous assurances had been broken, whatever justification might have been advanced by Herr Hitler, on the grounds of his mission, as he conceives it, to incorporate ex-German territory and predominantly German areas in the Reich. But in his actions until after Munich a case could be made that Herr Hitler had been true to his own principles, the union of Germans in, and the exclusion of non-Germans from, the Reich. Those principles he has now overthrown, and in including 8 million Czechs under German rule he has surely been untrue to his own philosophy. The world will not forget that in September last Herr Hitler appealed to the principle of self-determination in the interests of 2 million Sudeten Germans. That principle is one on which the British Empire itself has been erected, and one to which accordingly, as your Lordships will recollect, we felt obliged to give weight in considering Herr Hitler's claim. That principle has now been rudely contradicted by a sequence of acts which denies the very right on which the German attitude of six months ago was based, and whatever may have been the truth about the treatment of 250,000 Germans, it is impossible for me to believe that it could only be remedied by the subjugation of 8 million Czechs.

What conclusions, as asked the noble Marquess, are we to draw from this conquest of Czecho-Slovakia? Are we to believe that German policy has thus entered upon a new phase? Is

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German policy any longer to be limited to the consolidation of territory predominantly inhabited by persons of German race? Or is German policy now to be directed towards domination over non-German peoples? These are very grave questions which are being asked in all parts of the world to-day. The German action in Czecho-Slovakia has been furthered by new methods, and the world has lately seen more than one new departure in the field of international technique. Wars without declarations of war. Pressure exercised under threat of immediate employment of force. Intervention in the internal struggles of other States. Countries are now faced with the encouragement of separatism, not in the interest of separatist or minority elements but in the imperial interests of Germany. The alleged ill-treatment of German minorities in foreign countries which, it is true, may sometimes, perhaps often, arise from natural causes, but which may also be the subject and result of provocation from outside, is used as a pretext for intervention.

These methods are simple and, with growing experience, quite unmistakable. Have we any assurance that they will not be employed elsewhere? Every country which is Germany's neighbour is now uncertain of the morrow, and every country which values its national identity and sovereignty stands warned against the danger from within, inspired from without. During the last few days there have been rumours that the German Government were adopting a harsh attitude in their negotiations with the Roumanian Government on economic matters. I am glad to say that the Roumanian Government have themselves denied a report that went so far as to speak of an "ultimatum"; but even if there is no menace to Roumania to-day, or even if that menace has not to-day developed, and even though it may not develop on these lines, it is not surprising if the Government of Bucharest, like other Governments, should view with the gravest misgivings the happenings of these last few days.

For years past the British people have steadily desired to be on friendly terms with the German people. There is no stronger national instinct among our people than the instinct that leads them, when they have a fight, to shake hands and try to make it up. Our people were not backward in recognising some of

the mistakes of the Versailles Treaty that required remedying, but each time during these last years that there has seemed a chance of making progress in understanding, the German Government has taken action which has made that progress impossible. More especially has that been the case in recent months. Very shortly after Munich certain measures were taken by the German Government that gave a profound shock to world opinion. Quite recently it was to be hoped, although there were many clouds still over and below the horizon, that we could look forward to closer economic collaboration, and it was in the hope of developing that economic collaboration into something wider that, as your Lordships know, we had decided on those visits to which I referred a moment ago. All that initiative has been frustrated by the action of the German Government last week, and it is difficult to see when it can be easily resumed.

These affairs, as I said a moment or two ago, have raised wide issues, and the events in Czecho-Slovakia require His Majesty's Government and require every free people to rethink their attitude towards them. Broadly speaking, there have been, at all events since the war, two conflicting theses as to the best method of avoiding conflicts and creating security for the nations of the world. The first thesis is that which upholds the creation of and supports machinery for consultation, conciliation and arbitration with, if possible, the sanction of collective force, and involves an invitation to all States, willing to accept a wide degree of obligation to one another, to agree that an attack on one should be treated as an attack on all. That, your Lordships know well enough, has been the thesis expressed in the Covenant of the League of Nations. Perhaps it is true to say that more precise effect was sought to be given to it in the Geneva Protocol, and it has itself given rise to a number of regional agreements for mutual assistance between the several Powers concerned. That is the first thesis.

The second, which has been in conflict, has been upheld by those who consider that systems seeking to provide collective security, as it has been termed, involved dangerously indefinite commitments quite disproportionate to the real security that these commitments gave. Those who took that view were per-

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suaded that States, conscious of their own pacific purposes, would be wise to refrain from such commitments which might draw them into a war in which their own vital interests were not threatened, and that, therefore, States should not bind themselves to intervene in conflicts unless they themselves were directly attacked.

That is the conflict of philosophy of which your Lordships are very well aware, because in one form or another it has constantly been debated in this House. I have no doubt that in considering these two theses the judgment of many has been influenced by the estimate that they place, rightly or wrongly, upon the probability of direct attack. If it were possible, in their judgment, to rate that probability low, then that low probability of direct attack had to be weighed against what might seem to them the greater risk of States being involved in conflicts that were not necessarily arising out of their own concerns. But if and when it becomes plain to States that there is no apparent guarantee against successive attacks directed in turn on all who might seem to stand in the way of ambitious schemes of domination, then at once the scale tips the other way, and in all quarters there is likely immediately to be found a very much greater readiness to consider whether the acceptance of wider mutual obligations, in the cause of mutual support, is not dictated, if for no other reason than the necessity of self-defence. His Majesty's Government have not failed to draw the moral from these events, and have lost no time in placing themselves in close and practical consultation, not only with the Dominions, but with other Governments concerned upon the issues that have suddenly been made so plain.

It is not possible as yet fully to appraise the consequences of German action. History, to which the noble Marquess always refers us with great profit and enjoyment, records many attempts to impose a domination on Europe, but all these attempts have, sooner or later, terminated in disaster for those who made them. It has never in the long run proved possible to stamp out the spirit of free peoples. If history is any guide, the German people may yet regret the action that has been taken in their name against the people of Czecho-Slovakia. Twenty years ago that people of Czecho-Slovakia recovered their liberties with the support and encouragement of the

greater part of the world. They have now been deprived of them by violence. In the course of their long history this will not be the first time that this tenacious, valiant and industrious people have lost their independence, but they have never lost that which is the foundation of independence—the love of liberty. Meanwhile, just as after the last war the world watched the emergence of the Czech nation, so it will watch to-day their efforts to preserve intact their cultural identity and, more important, their spiritual freedom under the last and most cruel blow of which they have been the victims.

No. 11.

Question and the Prime Minister's answer in the House of Commons on March 23, 1939.

Mr. Attlee (by Private Notice) asked the Prime Minister whether he has any further statement to make on the European situation?

Answer.

The Prime Minister: His Majesty's Government have already made clear that the recent actions of the German Government have raised the question whether that Government is not seeking by successive steps to dominate Europe, and perhaps even to go further than that. Were this interpretation of the intentions of the German Government to prove correct, His Majesty's Government feel bound to say that this would rouse the successful resistance of this and other countries who prize their freedom, as similar attempts have done in the past.

I am not yet in a position to make a statement on the consultations which have been held with other Governments as a result of recent developments. I wish to make it clear, however, that there is no desire on the part of His Majesty's Government to stand in the way of any reasonable efforts on the part of Germany to expand her export trade. On the contrary, we were on the point of discussing in the most friendly way the possibility of trade arrangements which would have benefited both countries when the events took place which, for the time being at any rate, put a stop to those discussions. Nor is this Govern-

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BRITISH BLUE BOOK

Documents concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939, London, 1939.

NO. 10

Speech by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the House of Lords on March 20, 1939.

It is quite true, as both the noble Lord who spoke first and the noble Marquess have said, that recent events have been a profound shock to all thinking people in this country and very far outside it. It may perhaps be of use if with all brevity I give the House a short narrative in order to make sure we have the setting correct of what has actually passed during the last few days. The German military occupation of Bohemia and Moravia began on the morning of the 15th March, and was completed, as we know, without serious incident. It is to be observed - and the fact is surely not without significance - that the towns of Mahrisch-Ostrau and Vitkovice were actually occupied by German S. S. detachments on the evening of the 14th March, while the President and the Foreign Minister of Czecho-Slovakia were still on their way to Berlin and before any discussion had taken place.

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BRITISH BLUE BOOK

Documents concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939, London, 1939.

No. 12

Sir N. Henderson, British Ambassador in Berlin, to Viscount Halifax.

Berlin, May 28, 1939.

My Lord,

I paid a short visit to Field-Marshal Goring at Karinhall yesterday . . .

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4. At this point the field-marshal interrupted me with a description of President Hacha's visit to Berlin. I told Field-Marshal Goring that it was not possible to talk of free will when I understood that he himself had threatened to bombard Prague with his aeroplanes, if Dr. Hacha refused to sign. The field-marshal did not deny the fact but explained how the point had arisen. According to him Dr. Hacha had from the first been prepared to sign everything but had said that constitutionally he could not do so without reference first to Prague. After considerable difficulty telephone communication with Prague was obtained and the Czech Government had agreed, while adding that they could not guarantee that one Czech battalion at least would not fire on the German troops. It was, he said, only at that stage that he had warned Dr. Hacha that, if German lives were lost, he would bombard Prague. The field-marshal also repeated, in reply to some comment of mine, the story that the advance occupation of Mitkowitz had been effected solely in order to forestall the Poles who, he said, were known to have the intention of seizing this valuable area at the first opportunity.

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TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT 2861-PS
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Britisches Blaubuch

Dokumente betr. deutsch-polnische Beziehungen und den Ausbruch von Feindseligkeiten zwischen Grossbritannien und Deutschland am 3. September 1939. London, 1939.

Nr. 12

Seine Exzellenz, N. Henderson, Britischer Botschafter in Berlin, an Vicomte Halifax.

Berlin, 28. Mai 1939

Exzellenz!

Ich besuchte gestern Feldmarschall Goering fuer eine kurze Zeit in Karinhall.

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4. Bei dieser Gelegenheit unterbrach mich der Feldmarschall und beschrieb mir den Besuch des Praesidenten Hacha in Berlin. Ich antwortete Feldmarschall Goering, dass es unmoeglich sei, von freiem Willen zu sprechen, da, wie man mir gesagt haette, er doch selber gedroht haette, Prag mit seinen Flugzeugen zu bombardieren, falls Dr. Hacha sich weigern sollte, zu unterschreiben. Der Feldmarschall bestritt diesen Tatbestand nicht, erklaerte mir aber, wie die ganze Sache gekommen sei. Nach seiner Darstellung war Dr. Hacha vom Anfang an bereit, alles zu unterschreiben, hatte jedoch erklaert, dass er das verfassungsgemaess nicht tun koennte, ohne sich zuerst an Prag zu wenden. Nach grossen Schwierigkeiten wurde eine Telephonverbindung mit Prag hergestellt und die tschechische Regierung gab ihre Zustimmung, fuegte allerdings hinzu, dass sie nicht garantieren koennte, dass nicht das eine oder andere tschechische Bataillon auf die deutschen Truppen feuern wuerde. Erst dann, sagte er, hatte er Dr. Hacha gewarnt, dass er Prag bombardieren lassen wurde, wenn deutsche Leben verloren gehen wuerden. Als Antwort auf eine Bemerkung von mir, wiederholte der Feldmarschall auch, dass die Besetzung von Witkowitz nur deshalb fruehzeitig erfolgt sei, um den Polen zuvorzukommen; von denen wusste man genau, sagte er, dass sie die Absicht hatten, dieses wertvolle Gebiet bei der erstbesten Gelegenheit zu besetzen.

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION
OF DOCUMENT 2861-PS

29 November 1945.

I WALTER B. SELIGSON, 1st Lt., 01558904 hereby certify that I am thoroughly conversant with the English and German languages; and that the above is a true and correct translation of Document 2861-PS.

WALTER B. SELIGSON
1st Lt.
01558904.

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Filed Dec. 5, 1945

EXHIBIT U.S.A.

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"British Blue Book" 1E

~~Annex 20~~

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